

Appropriations Committee
Presentation on the Governor's Proposed Budget Adjustments

Department of Correction
Testimony of Brian K. Murphy, Acting Commissioner

February 09, 2010

Good afternoon Senator Harp, Representative Geragosian, and members of the Appropriations Committee. I am Acting Commissioner Brian Murphy and I am pleased to come before you today to speak in support of Governor Rell's proposed adjustments to the Fiscal Year 2011 budget for the Connecticut Department of Correction. I am joined today by Chairman Robert Farr of the Board of Pardons and Paroles, and Dr. Robert Trestman, representing our health care contractor, the University of Connecticut, Correctional Managed Health Care.

The Governor's budget proposal for the Department of Correction reflects the economic challenge we face throughout the state and the nation. My staff and I are committed to meeting this challenge. This budget supports our mission to protect the public through the maintenance of safety, security and good order within our correctional facilities. It provides the tools to continue offender reentry strategies and criminal justice reforms enacted under Public Acts 08-01 and 08-51. As you may have heard in recent hearings, these reforms continue to improve processes throughout the criminal justice system. Public Act 09-7, passed in the September Special Session, provides the Department with additional tools to help to support effective reentry and allow us to better manage the inmate population.

The inmate population today is about 700 lower than at this time last year, largely as a result of the reforms that I just mentioned. I am grateful for the support and collaboration we have received from the Governor, this Legislature, the Judicial branch, our sister agencies and our community partners, all of whom participated in the progress we have experienced this year. As always, I am proud to acknowledge our dedicated and professional correctional staff. It is through their efforts that I can report to you - once again - that our facilities remain safe, secure and without major incident.

I am also proud of the commitment my staff has shown to reducing costs wherever possible. We project significant reductions this year compared to last year both in Personnel Services and in Other Expenses. To date we have reduced overtime hours by more than 160,000 hours and saved \$7.8m. Other Expenses to date have been lowered by \$9.3m. At the same time we have worked to improve our programs and operations. We have re-defined our Community Program needs, solicited new proposals and negotiated contracts to improve efficiency and accountability. We are also actively implementing grant-funded projects to:

- improve our community case management system,
- expand the use of video conferencing to expedite hearings and reduce costs, and
- ensure that every felony offender in our custody has a DNA sample on file.

And as you may be aware, we recently were able to close the Webster Correctional Institution, reallocating the staff to further reduce overtime and maintain operations at other locations.

Despite our progress, there is no mistaking the challenge we face in the coming year; but I am confident that safe and secure operations can and will be maintained under the proposed budget. It provides funding for the positions necessary to maintain our essential operations, and it maintains the current level of services for the Board of Pardons and Paroles. It addresses our needs in Other Expenses, where our very best efforts have not been sufficient to overcome rising costs. It also reflects the actual cost of Workers Compensation, where medical expenses continue to grow.

Our medical care contractor, University of Connecticut Correctional Managed Health Care, will be challenged in the coming year to maintain services while reducing expenses. I am confident, though, of their ability to meet the challenge.

In Community Support Services the Governor continues to support the expanded level of reentry services and supervision carried forward from Fiscal Year 2008 to provide resources to prepare inmates for successful reentry into the community.

The size of the inmate population continues to be the key to our financial success. We will bring every tool we have to bear on identifying those individuals who must remain incarcerated, while transitioning those who are eligible and appropriate for supervision in the community. Our primary mission, however, is safety; safety of the public, our staff, and those who are committed to my supervision. With the leadership of the Governor and with your guidance, I am confident that we can achieve financial success while meeting that mission.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today, and I would be happy to address any questions or concerns you may have.